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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 NAIROBI 001886

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: POLICE COMMISSIONER OUSTED, POTENTIAL OPENING FOR

REFORM

REF: A. NAIROBI 1652
[1](#)B. NAIROBI 1167
[1](#)C. NAIROBI 1172
[1](#)D. NAIROBI 1183

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger, Reasons 1.4 b,d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On September 8, the Office of the President announced the reassignment of former Police Commissioner Mohammed Hussein Ali and new appointments in a number of senior positions within the Kenya Police Service (KPS), effective immediately. We have long advocated for the removal of Ali, including at the highest levels during the Secretary's recent visit to Kenya in early August. Ali's dictatorial and micro-managing leadership style has alienated many of his colleagues in the KPS and has operated as a roadblock to fruitful cooperation on many key U.S. interests. However, it remains to be seen whether his replacement, Mathew Iteere, formerly head of the KPS' elite paramilitary General Services Unit, will be open to implementing critically-needed fundamental reforms. His reaction to the final report and recommendations of the Police Reform Task Force (see ref A), due in late September, will be one early indication of whether his tenure marks an era of positive change for the beleaguered and perpetually underfunded KPS. The Ambassador plans to meet privately with Iteere and the Minister of Internal Security, George Saitoti, as soon as possible and will report the outcome of that discussion septel. In the meantime, we will seek to engage with Iteere and other newly appointed senior staff on issues of mutual concern, including police reform. End summary.

ALI FINALLY REMOVED AS PRESSURE MOUNTS

[1](#)2. (S) A replacement for Police Commissioner Mohammed Hussein Ali had been rumored to be in the works for months, and on September 8, President Kibaki's office finally announced Ali's removal, as well as a significant reshuffle among the senior leadership of the Kenya Police Service (KPS), effective immediately. International pressure on Kibaki to replace Ali, who was widely viewed as a significant impediment to substantive police reform as well as international cooperation on critical issues such as counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics operations, has been steadily mounting, culminating in direct pressure from the Secretary during her August 5 meeting with Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga. UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killing Philip Alston called for Ali's removal in his February 2009 report; the Commission to Investigate Post-Election Violence, commonly known as the Waki

Commission, and the interim report of the Police Reform Task Force also mentioned Ali's leadership of the police as contributing to lack of respect for rule of law in Kenya. Ali's replacement is Mathew Kirai Iteere, formerly Commandant of the KPS' elite paramilitary unit, the General Services Unit (GSU). Ali was, however, given a golden parachute of sorts in the form of his appointment as CEO and Postmaster General of the parastatal Postal Corporation of Kenya.

NEW COMMISSIONER: POTENTIAL OPENING FOR REFORM OR BUSINESS AS USUAL?

13. (S) Mathew Kirai Iteere, the new Police Commissioner, formerly served as head of the GSU since June 2005. The GSU, made up of about 5,000 highly trained police officers and special forces personnel, has a mixed reputation with the public. First established in the 1940s, the GSU's primary mandate is to serve as a rapid reaction unit to conduct special operations as ordered by the Police Commissioner and to support other police units during security emergencies. It also has responsibility for the President's security and the security of vital government installations. Its four main divisions are headquarters company, the GSU training school, the special ops-oriented Recce company, and the G company, which provides security for all presidential houses and lodges in Kenya. During the early 1990s under former President Moi, the GSU was deployed to suppress political unrest and anti-government demonstrations associated with Kenya's movement towards multi-party democracy. It is also frequently deployed to unstable border areas as well to bring under control inter-ethnic conflict and armed cattle rustling among different groups in Kenya's remote and arid upper

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Eastern and North Eastern provinces. Some civil rights organizations in Kenya have alleged that the GSU is involved in committing serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killing. It is, however, the KPS' best-trained and equipped unit.

14. (S) During his tenure as head of GSU, Iteere emphasized the importance of professionalism and that he did not tolerate tribalism among the unit members. He aggressively sought to carve out a role for his troops in high threat, high value counterterrorism operations. Our view is that his troops are better trained, better at site exploitation, and less penetrated by extremists than the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, and therefore that a KPS headed by Iteere bodes well for improved Kenya-U.S. cooperation on counter-terrorism operations. Before heading the GSU, Iteere was picked by Kibaki to head his personal security team just after his election in 2002. A skilled player of office politics, Iteere managed to survive antagonizing Kibaki's influential and often irrational wife Lucy after he insisted on also providing security to Kibaki's second wife, Mary Wambui. He also managed to retain his important post as GSU Commandant under Ali, whose dictatorial management style alienated many senior career police officers. He was allegedly one of the few senior KPS officials who could see Ali privately without first running a gauntlet of assistants, and they had a relatively close and cordial working relationship. As an ethnic Meru, he is part of the renowned "Mount Kenya Mafia" that has traditionally supported the interests of Kibaki's ethnic group and its allied tribes and as such, represents a conservative point of view associated with the Kenyan power elite. He was born on September 9, 1962.

15. (S) Iteere is clearly beholden to Kibaki for this promotion and, as an experienced operative in the top echelons of the KPS, will be cautious in pursuing a bold path towards reform. However, he is more approachable than Ali and much more likely to see value in U.S. training and assistance. His appointment has been greeted with relief by many within the KPS, and as a career officer, he does not suffer from the resentment that Ali experienced as an outsider appointed from the Kenyan military to "clean house"

within the KPS. Ali's removal represents a window of opportunity for more constructive engagement with the KPS as well as for urgently needed police reforms, and we will do our utmost to maximize this opening.

BIO DATA ON SENIOR KPS APPOINTEES

¶6. (U) Kibaki's office announced the following appointments: Mathew Kirai Iteere as Commissioner of Police; Francis Omondi Okonya as Senior Deputy Commissioner of Police I; Julius Kangara Ndegwa as Senior Deputy Commissioner of Police II in charge of Operations; Jonathan Kipkurui Koskei as Senior Deputy Commissioner of Police II in charge of Reforms to the Kenya Police; Bakari Omar Jambeni as Senior Deputy Commissioner of Police II in charge of Logistics; Peter Kilonzo Kavila as Senior Deputy Commissioner of Police II and Commandant of the Kiganjo Police Training College; Simeon Karanja Gatiba as Director of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID); and Peter Eregai as Deputy Director of the CID.

¶7. (C) Several of the appointees served on the Presidential Escort Unit, Kibaki's security detail, and all are career police officers generally known as well-trained but conservative officers. In these appointments, Kibaki has relied on known and trusted close associates who are likely to look to the president for instruction and guidance rather than focusing on fundamental reforms. The following is brief bio data on the new senior police appointments.

Francis Omondi Okonya was promoted from Deputy Director of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID). An ethnic Luo in his late 40s, he is from Nyanza province and is said to have a close relationship with Ali. He is a career CID officer and graduate of training at the FBI Academy who has previously served in the Criminal Intelligence and Bank Fraud Units.

Julius Kangara Ndegwa, formerly Deputy Provincial Police Officer (PPO) for the Nairobi area, is in his mid 50s. He is

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from Central province and is close to Kibaki. He is described by RSO staff as an "old school police officer."

Jonathan Kipkurui Koskei, formerly PPO for North Eastern province, now in charge of police reforms at the KPS, is an ethnic Kalenjin in his mid 50s from Rift Valley province. He has served in the GSU and Presidential Escort Unit. RSO staff's initial assessment was that, as a conservative officer with traditional ideas, he would not be likely to make a strong impact on police reforms and would implement only what was ordered from above.

Bakari Omar Jambeni, formerly Commandant of the Police Training College, is in his mid 50s and is a Muslim from Coast province. He is a career police officer with good public relations skills and may be relied upon to facilitate our access to Police Headquarters.

Peter Kilonzo Kavila, formerly Director of Operations, is in his mid 50s and from Eastern province. He is a career police officer with experience in training, CID, and operations.

Simeon Karanja Gatiba, an ethnic Kikuyu in his mid 50s from Central province, is said to be close to Kibaki. He has served in training, operations, and CID.

Peter Eregai, formerly in charge of Small Arms control, is in his late 40s and from Rift Valley province. He has served in the Presidential Escort Unit and GSU.

PRESS STATEMENT

¶8. (U) On September 8, after consultation with Washington, post sent out the following press statement in reaction to

the removal of Ali.

Begin text:

The United States Government has consistently made clear the need for fundamental reforms to strengthen the rule of law in the police force and the judiciary. The changes announced today in police leadership are a potential first step. We urge that far-reaching institutional reform of the police be carried out, including through thorough and serious consideration of the final recommendations of the Task Force on Police Reform.

We are willing to work with the new commissioner and with the coalition government to support institutional reform of the police. We look forward to early consultations with the relevant authorities regarding how this can best be accomplished.

Fundamental police reform -- if carried out -- would be a positive development as part of a broader process to implement the reform agenda agreed to as part of the coalition agreement. We hope the government will also move forward in undertaking much-needed reforms in the judiciary, legal, and prosecutorial services in order to increase transparency and the fight against corruption.

End text.

COMMENT AND NEXT STEPS

19. (C) In addition to sending out the above press statement, the Ambassador plans to meet with Iteere and Minister of Internal Security Saitoti as soon as possible to urge them to act immediately on reforms and to discuss possible ways of broadening and deepening U.S.-Kenya cooperation on counterterrorism and other issues of mutual concern. Iteere and the other senior appointees, while all career officers with relatively conservative and establishment-oriented outlooks, represent a valuable chance to redefine our troubled relationship with the KPS and to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. In the coming weeks, we will also seek to engage with the other newly promoted officers, notably the new Senior Deputy Commissioner for reforms, to urge them to take long-overdue action on the major elements of the police reform agenda. End comment.

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